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ABSTRACT

The marked increase in the number of Hispanic bicultural students entering American colleges and universities has created new dilemmas for teachers of beginning and intermediate Spanish. In addition to the difficulties occasioned by new cultural perspectives, both student and teacher are faced with the problem of remodeling the classroom program to fit the needs of the student whose initial approach to spoken Spanish cannot be considered tabula rasa in the traditional sense, and whose previous contact with the language (and with language-learning in general) is non-normative. Preliminary testing and evaluation can be directed to complement one important aspect of the college-level bilingual classroom: the process that leads from correction to self-correction and self-evaluation. The nature of corrective work for the bilingual student will differ from that of the English-speaking student, as the bilingual has already broken the language barrier and already possesses a working knowledge of syntax, vocabulary and pronounciation. Given the scarcity of edited grammar and literature texts for the bilingual at the beginning and intermediate levels and the lack of studies dealing exclusively with this area, the methodology used to reinforce the correction to self-correction process will vary according to the nature of the problem. (Author/CLK)

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From Correction to Self-Evaluation in College-Level Spanish for Bilingual-Bicultural Students

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During the past year the Curriculum Development Committee of the Spanish Department at Yale University has been involved in a research project aimed at strengthening an already existing section of intermediate Spanish for bilingual-bicultural students and establishing such a program at the beginning level. The research has been comprehensive in nature, ranging from the general attitudinal concepts of teaching native speakers their own language to the specifics of selecting materials for the course, evaluating the incoming student's command of the language and designing, when necessary, supplementary exercises to deal with particular difficulties. In recent years there has been a heavy influx of U.S. Hispano students who oftentimes do not enroll in language courses which do not address the immediate linguistic difficulties experienced by speakers of Hispanic origin. The marked increase in the number of Hispano bicultural students entering American colleges and universities has created new dilemmas for teachers of Spanish. In addition to the difficulties occasioned by new cultural perspectives, both student and teacher face the task of remodeling the classroom program to fit the needs of the student whose initial approach to spoken Spanish cannot be considered tabula rasa in the traditional sense, and whose previous contact with the language (and with language-learning in general) is non-normative. Evaluating the bilingual's knowledge of Spanish, identifying colloquialism and misusage, familiarizing the student with concepts of Spanish grammar and providing a program in which the student can put to use his pre-academic knowledge of Spanish are all factors for consideration. Crucial to this task is the need for grammar and literature texts, and supplementary material specifically designed to meet this new challenge.

The CDC has consulted many diverse sources of information: programs for bilingual education at K-12 level; colleges and universities that have already established programs; publishing houses in the New York area, etcetera. All sources of information seemed to agree strongly on one essential point: there is no standardized, tried-and-true

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methodology for the teaching of bilinguals at college level and there is a lack of published material designed for this specific purpose. The CDC was encouraged in many instances to create its own material or to adapt already existing material available for English-speaking students of Spanish. Some sources were skeptical in regard to the need for new materials. A sales representative for a prominent New York textbook publishing house queried if a separate program was, in fact, necessary. Wasn't it possible to change the existing Anglo-oriented program to suit the needs of bicultural students. When the CDC countered with specific shortcomings in its existing program vis-a-vis the native speaker, the discussion ended on the following note: "If this is the case, it will be necessary for you to establish a program first. Then we can talk about publishing the appropriate texts. Before a market exists, how can we be expected to supply you with materials?" This objection, coupled with the lack of established methodology, forced the CDC to reconsider its approach and adopt a focus on the problematics of its own clientele. What were the problems that the incoming student of Hispanic origin thought he needed to overcome? How could he be helped in his objective? After polling a number of students a type of universal response began to emerge; most students felt that, although they were nominally conversant in Spanish in informal situations, they needed to be able to communicate in a formal manner, both spoken and written, to be able to communicate in a language that would be universally acceptable. Though vague as to what this notion of "universal" Spanish might be, many realized that what was appropriate in intimate conversation was not necessarily acceptable in a commercial, professional or academic environment. Many saw that their lack of familiarity with the written word or with formal spoken Spanish had lead to confusion with respect to regionalisms, colloquialisms, orthography and usage of grammar and diction.

The present paper examines one important aspect of the college-level bilingual classroom- the process that leads from correction to self-correction- and provides ideas and recommendations for the teacher of Spanish faced with this increasingly important phenomenon. Since the classroom program at these levels is essentially designed to deal with special kinds of written and spoken errors not evidenced in Anglo-oriented language programs, attention should be focused on the nature of the corrective work and the desired end. This is particularly important when

dealing with a student who has already broken the language barrier and who already possesses a working knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation, in contrast to the Anglo student with little or no previous experience in the language. For the Anglo student it is a tabula rasa learning situation; for the bilingual it is a matter of correction and expansion.

Preliminary Testing

For screening the college-level bilingual and measuring his language ability, there exists no particular standardized test as do at the elementary and secondary levels. The approach taken by educators thus far has been to rely on a comprehensive test, generally multiple choice and/or essay, akin to parts of the MLA-Cooperative Foreign Language Test. The primary purpose of such a preliminary exam is to determine at which course level the student belongs by the number of points scored. In this process the specific problems of the bilingual student are apt to be overlooked, for his needs cannot be readily determined merely by a test score. This is particularly true in institutions that do not have a SNS program or offer courses for bilingual students.

Preliminary testing is a four-part, broad-based examination to establish a basis of criteria, however tenuous or flexible, between two levels of competence in the language. The dictation evaluates the student's proficiency in recognizing the sounds of spoken Spanish and faithfully reproducing them in written form. A scarcity of errors in orthography and punctuation points simultaneously to a familiarity with the written language and to proper listening comprehension, since it is unlikely that the student would be able to correctly transform what he hears into written Spanish without partially understanding what has been said. The dictation could also point to the influence of English phonetics in the bilingual's spelling. The multiple choice section of the diagnostic test can be used to ascertain the scope of the student's vocabulary and his ability to comprehend short reading passages of varying complexity within a given time frame. Multiple choice questions could also deal with idiomatic usage versus direct translation from English. The composition is used to reveal qualitatively the clarity and complexity of the student's use of syntactical structures, the degree of appropriateness in his diction (to include reliance on colloquialism and translation), and reconfirms his knowledge of orthography. Finally, the personal interview assesses the student's ability

to correctly produce the sounds of spoken Spanish, his fluidity of speech and proficiency in comprehending and responding spontaneously in different subject areas. The three directed phases of testing (dictation, multiple choice and interview) range generally from the elementary, concrete use of the language to increasingly complex and abstract forms, thus providing the necessary spectrum for evaluation. Also useful for measuring vocabulary would be a "word invention" test, used to measure the bilingual's degree of dominance in one or the other language, by his ability to form from a nonsense word, first a list of words in English, then a list of Spanish words, both within a certain period of time. (1) The subject matter should in all cases be universal enough to allow the student to display as fully as possible his familiarity with the language and should avoid restricting the student's response to areas that require specialized vocabulary or rhetoric. The four testing areas, while designed to evaluate specific language skills, are complementary in nature, interlocking and reconfirming one another to provide as objective an evaluation as time and effort permit.

Evaluating these areas will in turn allow the teacher to determine the specific problem(s) to be worked on, corroborating problem areas shown in morphosyntactical studies of different Hispanic speakers, and at what level the student's needs can best be met. (2) The key for the instructor would be to build from the above diagnostic tests, rather than to presume ignorance on the student's part, as in tabula rasa methodologies.

Level I of Instruction

Having assessed the bilingual's language ability, the student is now ready to be channeled into either the beginning or intermediate levels of instruction for which the teacher will have designed a suitable classroom program reflecting the morphosyntactic patterns and errors evidenced in the preliminary testing. Crucial to the success of the of the program is the methodology to be used and its relationship to the text(s).

Level I will average five contact hours per week. At this level caution must be exercised to avoid choosing grammar texts that presume a previous reading knowledge on the part of the student, texts geared toward English speakers or toward any one particular group of the bilingual population, and texts that rely heavily on translation and paradigmatic learning, rote

memorization of dialogues, substitution and patterned response drills that prove boring to the bilingual since his syntax is already developed at this level. Attention must be paid to select a grammar text that arranges or presents categories of speech in contextual rather than paradigmatic or categorical relationships and that relies on a series of principles involving the ordering of grammatical elements from the concrete to the abstract, meaningful contiguity in the arrangement of grammar and vocabulary, interdependence on new concepts and material taught previously, the ordering of grammatical elements from most important to least important and, lastly, dialogue with teacher and interaction among students. The lack of a textbook at this level written specifically for the bilingual student has given way to a tradition of "doing one's own thing" in the classroom on the part of many educators whose attitudes emphasize "good speech habits" and standardized orthography. Of the two texts currently available on the market, Español para el bilingüe and Español para los hispanos, the former is geared to the Chicano bilingual at secondary, possibly college level; the latter is unsuitable as a college-level classroom text.

A graded literary or cultural reader could be used as a device for teaching language and for strengthening the student's appreciation of the written form, but is not to be used for literature per se. It is to be non-metaphorical in content. It serves to test a student's ability to read aloud and his handling of the written word; students are asked to verbally paraphrase the short readings to measure their understanding and grasp of new vocabulary. Given the remedial nature of vocabulary building for the bilingual, introducing the student to the use of the dictionary at this point would serve as an aid in the writing of short compositions dealing with the directed readings or related topics. In the use of Spanish-English dictionaries students are shown how to cross-check themselves by referring to both entries. Edited grammar and literature texts that reinforce idiomatic use are preferable to all others. Corrected compositions will be reviewed in class and representative errors discussed, chiefly cacographs but also occasional syntactical lapses or inappropriate lexical choices. Common errors are codified on compositions and students refer to this code to check against improper usage. This is particularly apt for contrasting and resolving metaphorical use, colloquialisms, regionalisms, and informing students of points they would

be likely to miss. In addition to compositions, limited oral reports will be assigned to measure continuity of thought, development of theme, and, most important, the extent to which the student is able to maintain a fluent conversation or discussion. As the goals of the bilingual classroom are to encourage exclusive use of the target language, translation and the use of English are infrequent teaching devices, and employed to treat those problems resulting from direct translation from English, where circumlocution and paraphrase prove inadequate or too lengthy.

Given the lack of grammatical preparation in the target language, as well as in English, there is the need to render the study of grammar organic to the study of language. Most texts introduce the student to a specific and technical vocabulary yet soft-pedal the study of grammar. This problem can be avoided by slowly introducing the student to the vocabulary and parts of speech he will draw on in future study of the language and for self-correction. Grammatical terms are to be introduced as needed so as not to overwhelm the student.

Since the bilingual's written knowledge of the language is generally subverted by his written and spoken knowledge of English, and his contact with the written form less than with the spoken form, strengthening the student's contact with the non-verbal form of the language will be the first job of the teacher. Frequent dictations serve to spot orthographic errors and misusage that are then isolated are worked on. Caution must be exercised to introduce and to test but one problem at a time so that the student might familiarize himself with the specifics of any given problem and know why his verbal or written response is incorrect, and how to check himself against future error. As the student becomes familiar with and self-confident in dealing with particular trouble spots, a "proof-reading" is introduced to test his ability to locate and correct blatant orthographic errors in exercises, preferably contextual, containing numerous errors of the same kind, that become progressively more difficult. An example of this is a syntactically correct paragraph containing no or improperly placed accent marks.(3) The ultimate goal in the proof-reading exercise is to provide the student a vehicle for self-correction both in- and outside the classroom, and to make him aware of the need to be precise in self-expression. The proof-reading

exercise can also be used to encourage students to correct and evaluate each other's written and spoken performance in a collective teaching and learning situation.

Laboratory work will include reading and oral comprehension exercises and dictations to be corrected at home or in the laboratory by providing answer sheets to verify his response. Such outside activity stimulates and challenges the student to work on his own and, in relegating him responsibility in the learning process, makes him an active participant in the method.

Level II of Instruction

A student who has successfully mastered the beginning level of language skills, as evidenced either through diagnostic testing or satisfactory completion of Level I, is admitted to the Intermediate Level. Levels I and II are concurrent, year-long courses that meet five hours weekly. Given the differences in subject matter and methodology, the Level I course could meet five times a week for one hour sessions and the intermediate course two or three times weekly for longer periods.

The intermediate level will differ markedly from Level I with regard to methodology, nature of the material and roles of the student and teacher. Since Level I assumes an advanced degree of competence in orthography and grammar, initial review will be relatively brief in these areas and will be confined to developing more esoteric usage of previously learned grammatical structures and the finer points of orthography. The student becomes responsible for vocabulary that is often either technical or abstract in nature, as well as the correct use of varied idiomatic expressions. He is encouraged to use a Spanish-to-Spanish dictionary of word usage rather than a bilingual one, and is taught to cross-check definitions, combining his knowledge of grammar with an understanding of the dictionary abbreviations to achieve proper diction. The "correction of proofs" exercises that were used in Level I as a final step in the student's learning of orthography, punctuation and basic grammar are now employed in Level II to test the student's ability to identify colloquialism, misuasge of idioms and lack of grammatical logic in more complex constructions involving coordination and subordination in syntactical relationships. The student will be encouraged to apply this proof-reading technique to his own essays and in preparation of oral presentations.

Since an advanced reading ability is expected to be developed by the end of Level I, the Level II student can

assimilate longer and more complex readings of diverse nature outside of class. The teacher will sometimes direct individual students towards specific material, rather than having the whole class read the same material as in Level I. These readings will be used as a basis for oral presentations and panel discussion, or will be incorporated as secondary source material in a limited number of carefully prepared essays. The oral reports and essays, which in Level I dealt with subjective and concrete themes familiar to the student's everyday world, are expected to become more objectified and abstract at the intermediate level through the inclusion of other points of view, theory and factual data that the student gleans from his readings.

In the same manner that the Level I student learns to employ circumlocution or define a Spanish word for which he knows only the English equivalent, the Level II student must learn techniques of paraphrasing and narrating and use them to a greater extent than in Level I. Exercises are devised in which the students, either individually or collectively, are called upon to retell or recount the plot or line of reasoning in motion pictures, short pieces of literature or polemical essays. Although complex stylistic analysis and interpretation of literature does not fall within the scope of the course, the student's increasing awareness of the structure of the language should enable him to begin to confront the de-structuring of normative speech for esthetic purposes. He will come in contact with selected works of literature that use colloquialisms and deliberate error in grammar to achieve esthetic effect. In many cases the bicultural student will be able to identify with the idiosyncracies in the speech patterns of literary characters that come from his own region of the Hispanic world. The student may be asked to transform parts of a creative work into normative speech, or conversely, to adopt the colloquial speech of a character for dramatic reading in class in order to compare and differentiate the speech patterns of others.

It is obvious from the above that Level II relies much less than Level I on the protracted use of a specific text. The Level II teacher must avail himself of a healthy repetoire of selected materials from all sources, to include expository and creative literature, films and slides, and native informants who can present controversial material or be interviewed by students. At Level II the student

becomes increasingly independent, working outside the classroom and sometimes outside the academic sphere, in contact with members of the Spanish-speaking community, migrant workers' and adult education programs, shop owners, etcetera, to broaden his relationships with native speakers and bring new and fresh material to the attention of the class. The teacher is characteristically less dominant in the Level II classroom as students assume a greater degree of responsibility for directing classroom discussion and for preparation outside the classroom. The teacher moderates, corrects when necessary, promotes discussion and directs the students to new materials, frequently on an individual basis.

It may be asked at this juncture what happens to the bicultural student after Level II. After completing Level II the student may elect to take courses in advanced conversation and composition, introductory courses in creative literature, or he may decide to follow the curriculum for the Spanish major. For many, however, Level II will be the last course of formal instruction in the language, due to requirements that the student faces in preparing himself for specialization in other fields of endeavor. For this reason, the Level II course is a broad-based program, calculated to meet the needs of students with diverse interests, with the goal of developing communication skills that may be employed universally. If the course teaches the student a critcal self-awareness in his use of Spanish and provides him with the tools necessary to further development of verbal and non-verbal speech, then it achieves its purpose.

For the foreign language educator designing for the first time his own program of study for bilinguals at Levels I and/or II, the recommended principles set forth in this working paper may prove beneficial. The lack of appropiate texts and methodology at the college level for bilingual students results in the need on the part of the teacher to be resourceful and innovative, adapting when necessary materials to complement his handling and presentation of corrective work. As the teacher becomes acquainted with his class and modifies his program to accomodate unexpected trouble areas and questions relating to methodology, he will realize the need for a certain flexibility on a day-to-day basis, given the experimental and unpredictable nature of the class program and the many variables involved. Methodology and theory will eventually evolve as the phenomena is studied in the immediacy of the classroom situation.

FROM CORRECTION TO SELF-EVALUATION

Given the scope and limitation of this paper, our endeavor has been to isolate and focus on but one aspect of the bilingual classroom -strategies in correction and self-correction for the educator of college-level bilingual students. Developing this area may prove helpful in strengthening and improving existing teaching techniques and result in new approaches to introducing and teaching related classroom problems. The lack of studies like the present dealing exclusively with the correction and self-evaluation process points to the need for educators of bilingual students, K-12 and college, to estimate the effectiveness of their program(s) in meeting this increasingly important area of bilingual education. Educators of non-bilingual students may avail themselves of recommendations here to ascertain how this method of correction and self-correction could apply to their classroom in treating points learned and mislearned, errors and misconceptions resulting from paradigmatic and categorical juxtaposition rather than contextual presentation of material.

FOOTNOTES

(1) "Flexibility Test to Measure Language Dominance in Spanish-English Bilinguals", Dr. Gary D. Keller, City College of New York.

(2) A good example of such a morphosyntactical study is "Variantes morfosintácticas en el español de Tejas", Yolanda R. Solé, December 1976, ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Arlington, Va.

(3) Anthony Girard Lozano recognized the need for this particular kind of exercise in "Teaching Standard Versus Non-Standars Spanish in a Study Abroad Program", December 1976, ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Arlington, Va. He states: "The advantage of such exercises is in the economy of time and the concentration on given types of errors within a paragragh or longer passage. These exercises were given as home assignments which were then later presented and corrected in class by each student. Since this requires less correction of each exercise by the professor, the time saved can be used for other activities. Furthermore, since the last stage of formal writing involves proof reading, the student is led to develop his skills in this final stage.